

COLLECTION OF SPECIMENS FOR ISOLATION OF *C. diphtheriae*

Clinical specimens for culture should be obtained as soon as possible when diphtheria (involving any site) is suspected, even if treatment with antibiotics has already begun. Unless the index of suspicion is low, close contacts of suspected cases, also, should have specimens taken from the nose and throat. (Culture of *C. diphtheriae* from close contacts may confirm the diagnosis of the case, even if the patient's culture is negative.) Use a dry, sterile swab.

Throat swabs

1. Pharynx should be clearly visible and well illuminated.
2. Depress tongue with an applicator and swab the throat without touching the tongue or inside of the cheek.
3. Rub vigorously over any membrane, white spots, or inflamed areas; slight pressure with a rotating movement must be applied to the swab.
4. If any membrane is present, lift the edge and swab beneath it to reach the deeply located organisms. A portion of the membrane may also be submitted for testing.

Nasopharyngeal specimens

1. Insert the swab into the nose through one nostril beyond the anterior nares.
2. Gently introduce the swab along the floor of the nasal cavity, under the middle turbinate until the pharyngeal wall is reached. Force must not be used to overcome any obstruction.

Skin diphtheria and other lesions

1. Lesions should be cleansed with sterile normal saline and crusted material removed.
2. Press the swab firmly into the lesion.

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- **Place swabs in a culturette swab transport system. If transport time is anticipated to be < 24 hours, Amies or Modified Stuart's medium is recommended. If transport time is to be \geq 24 hours, silica gel is recommended. Send specimen with the attached submission form to the MA SLI.**
 - **Call the MA SLI Bacteriology Reference Laboratory at 617-983-6607 to notify them that specimens for diphtheria culture are on the way, since isolation of *C. diphtheriae* requires special tellurite-containing media.**
 - **If *C. diphtheriae* is isolated, regardless of association with disease, MDPH staff will arrange for shipment of isolates to the Diphtheria Laboratory, National Center for Infectious Diseases, CDC, as directed by CDC.**